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**HOUSE PASSES RECORD INCREASE  
IN FUNDING FOR VETERANS HEALTHCARE**

*Appropriation Bill Changes Habit Of Paying  
Only Lip-Service To Nation's Veterans', Obey Says*

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The U.S. House of Representatives today approved the fiscal year 2008 appropriations bill for the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, which provides the largest single increase in funding in the agency's history. Seventh District Congressman Dave Obey (D-WI) serves as Chairman of the House Appropriations Committee.

– This bill provides the largest increase in funding for veterans in the VA's seventy-seven year history. It follows the increased funding we provided for veterans in this year's budget, and

clearly shows that we've made the needs of our servicemen and women our top priority," said Obey. "It represents our commitment to getting away from the old habit of saluting our veterans while the band plays, and then forgetting about them when the music stops."

The bill provides the Veterans Administration \$3.8 billion more than the President requested and \$6.7 billion more than last year.

Obey noted that the bill:

- Reminds America that care for veterans is a real cost of war.
  
- Exceeds the level recommended by the Independent Budget prepared by veterans' service organizations for VA medical care for the first time by \$294 million.
  
- Focuses resources on treating the mental and physical injuries "like traumatic brain injury and post-traumatic stress disorder" that our troops are returning home with.

- Adds over 1,000 new claims processors to allow the VA to significantly reduce the backlog of 400,000 claims.

- Increases funding to address the VA's repair and maintenance needs to prevent a Walter Reed type scandal from occurring in the VA system.

“There has been no sense of shared sacrifice when it comes to the war in Iraq. The only ones sacrificing are the members of our military and their families, and they’re doing double and triple duty,” Obey concluded. “We have an obligation to provide them more than lip service; we must provide them real service in terms of overcoming their injuries and ensuring they don’t get hassled when they come home. This bill represents our commitment to doing that.”

The measure must still be approved by the Senate before it can go to the President to become law.

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